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SUBJECT: Argentina: Mission's Black History Month Celebration
Proves a Huge Success

¶1. SUMMARY. Embassy Buenos Aires hosted over 150 Argentine and embassy guests in a day-long celebration of Black History Month on March 13, 2009. The day included a traditional African-American lunch, a program including a live performance of a hit song ("International Love") by a popular Afro-Argentine singer, and a DVC featuring University of Chicago anthropologist Sheila Walker on the quest for black citizenship in the Americas. Press coverage was positive and substantial. END SUMMARY.

¶2. "Two centuries after the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the inauguration of our President Barack Obama is a fundamental step towards the accomplishment of Dr. Martin Luther King's dream deeply rooted in the American dream...that all men are created equal." With these words, Ambassador Wayne opened post's celebration of Black History Month, with the participation of more than 150 guests, including African-Argentines, academic, political and civil society leaders, and embassy staff and family members. The afternoon's events included a traditional African-American barbeque, cultural festivities, and an academic examination via DVC of the impact of the election of the first African American President of the United States.

¶3. After a traditional African-American lunch, Ambassador Wayne greeted the guests with remarks in English and Spanish about the important place the day's celebration had in American society and how Martin Luther King's dream of a more equal and just society was still very much alive. Afterwards, the very popular African-Argentine singer Fidel Nadal, dressed in an oversized Obama t-shirt, sang (free-of-charge) his new award-winning song "International Love," as the more intrepid guests danced along with Nadal and the Ambassador.

¶4. Following the outdoor portion of the program, about 80 guests participated in a videoconference featuring renowned anthropologist Sheila S. Walker of the University of Chicago, who spoke on the topic "President Obama and African-American Participation in the Americas." The very well-received DVC, which ran over two hours (and could have run longer), gave participants the opportunity to discuss issues common to the black communities in Argentina and the United States. Walker's fluency in Spanish, her understanding of the Afro-Argentine community's history and current situation, and her honest, no-holds-barred views of the history and current state of affairs of race relations in the United States, won over her audience. As one participant pointed out, this was a rare opportunity for African-Argentines to discuss issues that they all confront with a sympathetic and experienced interlocutor.

¶5. The Embassy's celebration of Black History Month was widely covered by Argentine national and provincial media. National leading newspaper "Clarín" (in its widely read "Show Business" supplement), conservative "La Prensa," business-financial "Ambito Financiero," national wire service agency "Telam," America TV's "Encuentro Global" program, Channel 7, "26noticias.com.ar" and "Radio 10," as well as provincial dailies like "La Maana de Neuquen," all carried stories and covered the event. Several papers printed photos of Nadal and the Ambassador.

WAYNE

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